

COMPARATIVE REVIEW OF NATIONAL REPORTS

SUBMITTED BY MEMBER STATES IN THE FIELD OF ACTION

“YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP”

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Executive summary

The objective of this section is to provide an overview of the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy in the field of employment and entrepreneurship in the EU Member States and the four non-EU states that submitted reports on the issue: Croatia, Montenegro, Norway and Switzerland. Based on the National Reports (NRs) and an examination of policy documents, academic literature and statistical data, the comparative analysis of the NRs reveals a shared awareness of the gravity of the problems accumulated in the labour market integration of young people and the economic and social consequences of youth vulnerability. It also attests to the enormous efforts on all levels, European, national, regional and local, put forward for overcoming youth disadvantage and for supporting the young generation to make a successful entry in the world of work. They also point at the opportunities created by sharing of good practices and fostering of cooperation among all policy actors.

The promotion of youth employment and entrepreneurship has been realised through a variety of national strategies, specific measures and concrete initiatives which reflected both the common objectives set up in the EU Youth Strategy and the national traditions and current visions of national policy actors, including young people themselves. Thus while not all countries have designed specific measures to increase opportunities for flexible employment and statistical data confirm that indeed there are wide variations in the spread of part-time and fixed-term work in European labour markets, all reporting states have implemented initiatives to provide more security for the young entrants. Several countries have changed their labour codes and introduced tax incentives to stimulate employers for hiring young people.

Promoting cross-border professional and vocational opportunities among young people is another field of concerted efforts of national youth policies in the first cycle of implementation of the Youth Strategy. In some countries the implemented measures focus on EU-wide mobility while others concentrate on traditional cross-border links to allow young people to gain practical experience from work and training abroad. Everywhere special support schemes are designed to widen access to mobility for all young people and not only for a privileged minority.

Improving career guidance and counselling services and promoting quality internships and apprenticeships are the measures most widely developed by all countries in the field of youth employment. Using the new technologies, youth information centres and public employment agencies have created interactive websites for labour market information and advice for the new entrants or the unemployed. More attention was given to informal learning and the role that youth organisations play for improving young people's skills and employability. Many countries have established new frameworks for quality provision and control of internships and for the professionalization of career guidance and counselling.

Most NRs provide information about initiatives to promote the sharing of responsibilities among partners creating equal career and parenting opportunities for both young men and women. A crucial issue here is to increase the affordability and quality of childcare services. The novel focus in this policy domain is to tackle inequality in the household and change outdated models of parental roles through stimulating fathers to get involved in childcare and use parental leaves.

Encouraging entrepreneurship is a domain of youth policy that found a new impetus after 2010 when the EU Strategy came into force. Most Member States and some of the reporting non-EU members have devised and implemented specific measures to develop entrepreneurship education at all levels of the educational system starting from primary school. The focus on sustainable development when supporting youth entrepreneurial projects is also a novel trend in many parts of Europe. Several countries have made legal changes to reduce the financial and administrative burden and make it easier for young people to take the road from education or inactivity to the business start and from it to the business growth and success.

The results of the comparative review show that the priority of employment and entrepreneurship in the EU Youth Strategy was well accepted by the Member States and beyond and widely implemented in numerous initiatives in support of young people's creative potential. An all-inclusive perspective on policies providing opportunities for all young people to become the new qualified, flexible, and mobile workforce in European economy should be strengthened.

1. Introduction

In acknowledgement of the sharp rise of youth unemployment during the current economic crisis matched with a continual growth of the group of young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) which threaten the social integration of a whole generation, the promotion of youth employment and entrepreneurship became one of the eight main fields of action in the current EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018) and the overall thematic priority for the period of the first 18 months for the European cooperation in the youth field from January 2010-June 2011. The EU Youth Strategy envisaged that the Member States and the Commission within their respective spheres of competence will come up with initiatives that will ensure a specific youth perspective when devising flexicurity strategies; widen cross-border training opportunities for young people that will improve their professional and vocation skills and stimulate the free movement of workers across the EU; develop career guidance and counselling services; promote quality internships and apprenticeships to facilitate the labour market entry and career progress of young people; expand childcare provision and advance the sharing of responsibilities between partners; and support the development of European networks and structures promoting youth self-employment and encourage entrepreneurship particularly in the field of sustainable development.

This comparative overview is an analytical assessment of the implementation of the EU Youth strategy in the field of employment and entrepreneurship based on the National Youth Reports that were elaborated in answer to the comprehensive questionnaire developed by the European Commission. The information base consists of the reports provided by all the EU Member States and four non-EU states: Croatia, Montenegro, Norway and Switzerland (while all EU candidate countries and EFTA countries were invited to submit national reports on a voluntary basis). Besides the rich description of youth policy initiatives given in answer to Section 2a of the structured questionnaire, this review also built upon the results presented in the EU Youth Report issued toward the end of the first three-year work cycle in September 2012. In addition the comparative analysis also made use of the dashboard of youth indicators of Eurostat, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and Eurostat/UNESCO/OECD online data base on education (EUO). Background information was also gathered from research publications and websites of various research and policy organisations.

The aim of this study is to present in more detail the policy measures and activities taken in European countries for promotion of employability and entrepreneurship among young people. The challenges that this exercise faced were numerous. While the National Reports (NRs) list numerous initiatives, they do not represent an exhaustive picture of the changes in policies that were fostered by the adoption of the EU Youth Strategy in 2010. The information on some initiatives was very limited in order to fully evaluate them as best practices. Besides, national youth policies vary in their histories and traditions, legal approaches and scope of interventions, division of responsibilities between the main actors and the level of cooperation among them which had to be taken into consideration when assessing individual projects and measures. Nevertheless, we could draw some conclusions about the relevance and impact of the national efforts done to meet the priority of the Youth Strategy for youth employment and entrepreneurship and hence to contribute to the achievement of the objective for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of the wider Europe 2020 Strategy.

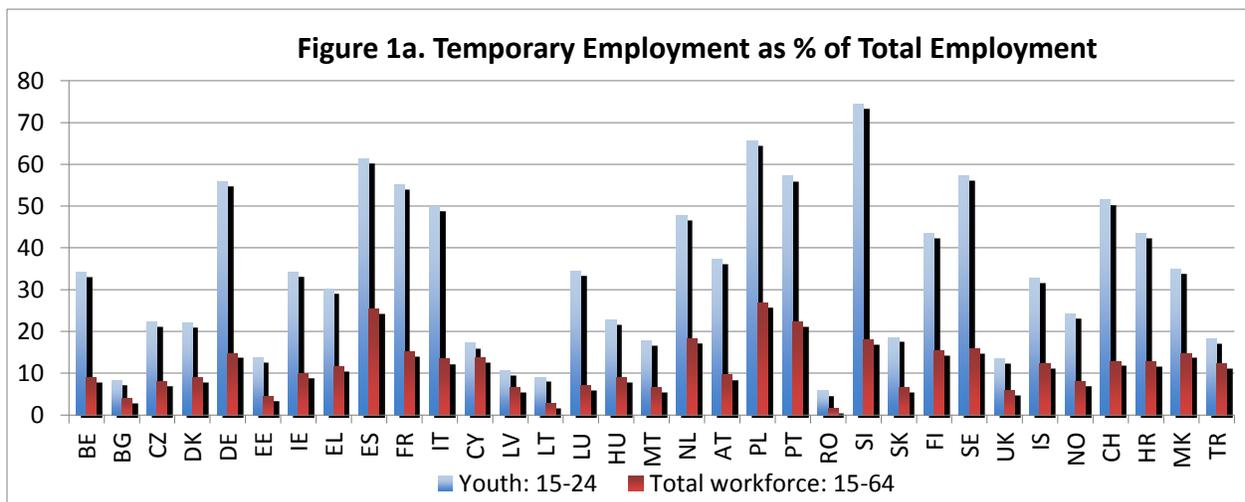
2. Comparative analysis

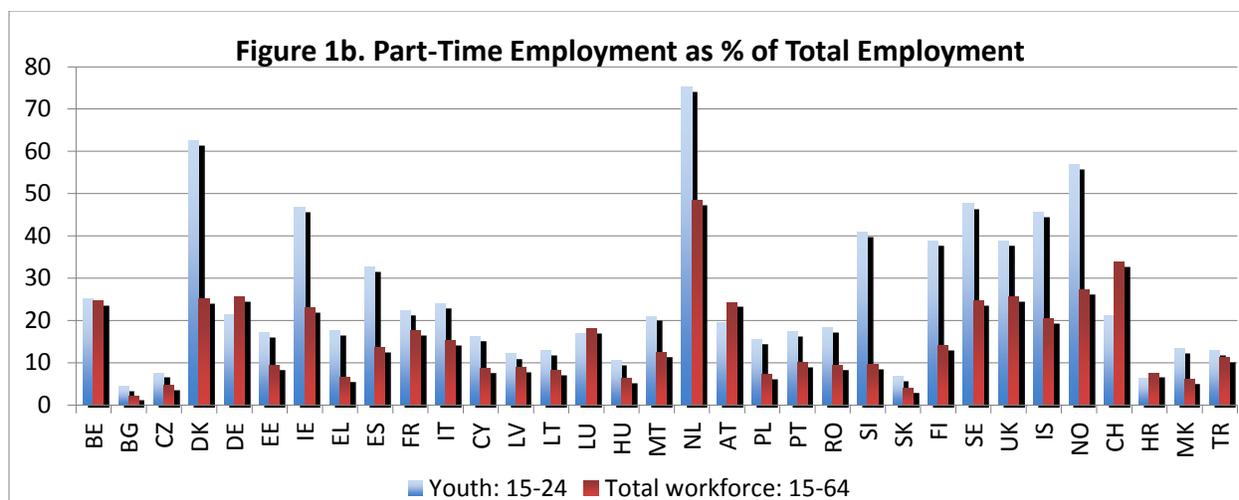
Making the transition to work remains one of the main channels for young people’s social integration in modern societies, allowing them to achieve economic independence and personal growth. In order to review the policy initiatives in support of youth employment, we follow the structure provided by the Questionnaire for the National Youth Reports.

2.1. Flexicurity strategies

In the past decades the world of work has been changing rapidly with the massive introduction of new materials and technologies, new communication media and organization of businesses, new occupational skills and values. A major trend in Europe and other developed countries in the world is the rise in the flexibility of work in terms of working time and schedules, working place and mobility, contractual conditions and skills changes, functions and wages. While it creates many opportunities for raising the quality of work, it also leads to labour market segmentation and job insecurity. A crucial policy challenge is how to balance the many forms of flexibility with an equitable security for employees without the erosion of their rights.

Young people are more often found in the flexible patterns of work. Figure 1a and 1b allow the comparison between youth and the whole workforce in European countries. The data reveal clearly that despite the large variations between the countries, in all of them young women and men are more likely than the older age groups to be employed in the two most common forms of flexible work – fixed-term and part-time jobs. Young people are also disproportionately concentrated in other flexible forms of contracts such as agency, zero hour, and on-call only. In addition their working schedules are often atypical, including week-end or night-time shifts, as the EU Youth Report (SWD(2012)257 final) underlines.





While flexicurity is about securing quality to the labour market transitions of present day employees of all ages, it is youth transitions from school to work that require specific and concerted policy assistance because in the life stage of youth they are simultaneously intermingled with the transition of the young person from the parental home to a new home and from the family of origin to a new family of their own, and more generally with the achievement of their human rights to become fully active and engaged citizens. Many policy initiatives on the national and local level in the Member States have taken into account the specific situation of young people when developing flexicurity policies. The impact of Youth Strategy on this policy field has been significant as half of the reporting countries have taken such measures after the Strategy came into force in 2010 or plan to introduce such measures in 2012. In addition 13 Member States report that they have already taken such measures before the EU Youth strategy came into force. Three EU Member States and two out of the four non-EU countries do not have current plans to implement such policies. Among these Switzerland for example gives an explanation by pointing at the country’s dual system combining work and study which has been successful in easing youth job search which in turn has resulted in a low unemployment rate.

Among the countries giving the answer ‘*no additional measures necessary*’, Denmark understandably stands out with the Danish flexicurity model and its long traditions and efficiency proven in the economic downturn in the first half of the 1990s. The youth specifics of the Danish approach as stated in the Danish NR is the early and active intervention with a focus on education and training for all young people and special initiatives for the vulnerable young people to guarantee them a future of education and jobs. Besides, tailor made initiatives within the active labour market policy focus on opening new opportunities for the unemployed person and a strong coordination between local and national actors contribute to successful employment transitions. Similarly to Denmark, Finland has traditions of mixing economic efficiency and social security backed with a developed universalistic welfare. The EU Youth Strategy has influenced the country’s National Programme Update to introduce new flexicurity policies (http://www.vm.fi/vm/en/04_publications_and_documents/01_publications/02_economic_surveys/20110406Europe/name.jsp).

‘Employment change security’ in Finland is an operative model aiming to improve the prospects of employees under the threat of dismissal, or those who have already been dismissed for economic or production-related reasons; to protect employees on fixed term contracts, those laid off for a period of 180 days, or those temporarily laid off. Thus, job seekers participating in the labour market services receive a ‘change security supplement’ to the earnings related employment allowance. The measure offers ‘from work – to work’ solutions such as trial work placements, early support in employment services, and job alternation leave system. It is implemented through intensified cooperation between employees, employers and Employment and Economic Development Offices.

A common move among the countries that have introduced new initiatives in response to the adopted Youth Strategy has been to expand the youth component of the active labour market policies focusing in particular on education, vocational training and counselling, incentives for employers to employ young persons on temporary contracts, subsidized employment for the most vulnerable groups among youth, youth workshops and job fares. Thus in Romania many amendments to the Labor Code were introduced in 2011 directed at improving the prospects of young people’s integration in the labour market through fixed-term contracts and these measures were accompanied with vocational counselling, labour mediation and job insertion measures, including subsidized loans from the unemployment insurance fund for young people to enrol in higher education institutions. The report of the German speaking community in Belgium points at the widening of opportunities for part-time work and part-times studies; matched with financial rewards which prevent young people from leaving school early before gaining qualifications. A particular mention deserves the “Flexicurity” conference, organized by the Belgian Presidency in collaboration with the EC, on 4-5 October 2010 in Gent, which underlined the importance of achieving a balance between the two sides of the policy through providing current and future workers with a range of opportunities, enabling them to make a real choice instead of simply complying under pressure.

Some NRs state that the policy discussions on flexicurity in their countries have not gone far in devising special initiatives targeting youth or that the few changes introduced have not had a significant effect (Irish, Slovenian and Croatian NRs). Other NRs also corroborate to the awareness that flexicurity cannot be put in place by quick-fix disjointed practices leading to a reduction of the ‘security’ elements during the economic crisis. There is recognition that a more proactive approach to the problems in the employment transitions of young people in Europe requires a greater focus on training (Bulgarian, Latvian, Polish NRs), early support measures for those moving from school to training (German NR), and special attention to the individual needs (Estonian NR).

The next paragraphs of this review show that even those countries which do not plan to develop flexicurity initiatives have invested significant effort in providing security through explicit measures in the field of creating opportunities for cross border mobility, guidance and training of young people when entering the labour market and/or finding difficulties to integrate in it.

2.2. Cross-border professional and vocational opportunities

Rising international mobility is another manifestation of the flexibilisation of work. The 21st century economy creates a labour market with ever growing requirements for adaptability and resourcefulness from a mobile labour force. Gaining professional and vocational experience in a

foreign country builds up young people's knowledge and skills and makes them more employable in any company settings. Work and training abroad serves as a means for experiential intercultural learning, developing young people's language skills, abilities to work in international teams and civic competences such as valuing diversity.

The higher readiness to explore new work and study opportunities gives an advantage to young men and women in Europe over the adult workers, as shown from the findings of the 2011 Flash Eurobarometer 319b and the analysis in the EU Youth Report. More than half of young Europeans state that they are willing to work in another European country (28% for a limited period of time and additional 25% for the long term). There is a lot of ground for improvements in this field as in practice only 14% have spent time abroad for studying or training and about 10% for working purposes and the most common financial resource was private funding or savings (65%). It is no wonder then that the expense of staying abroad is one of the main obstacles that young people consider when planning for international mobility.

The answers in the NRs to the specific question about cross border professional and vocational opportunities for young people show the popularity of such measures. The statements that policies for encouraging international exchanges have existed before the adoption of the EU Youth Strategy are 23 out of the 33 NRs in comparison with only 13 similar responses to the question on flexicurity initiatives. Even the four reports that gave the answer 'no such plans' have to do more with the understanding that the question concerned only nationally designed and funded activities than a total lack of measures promoting youth international professional and vocational activities. That is why here we will first present the most common forms of encouraging youth cross-border mobility and then focus on some nationally specific measures.

First of all, most countries stressed using the opportunities created by the EU programmes such as Youth in Action and Lifelong Learning Programme, with its sectoral programmes Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig. The Austrian NR cites 'The wind in your back' (RÜCKENWIND) as a successful practice in this field made possible with the support of Youth in Action. The same Austrian organization Cubic (Cultur und Bildung im Context) which carried out this project, has also implemented another thriving initiative under the Leonardo da Vinci Programme – Maven, providing migrant youth with access to vocational education networks. Two countries - Malta and Croatia - report to have used the opportunities created through Leonardo to develop their national qualifications framework through testing and implementing the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training. NRs from Greece, Malta, Montenegro and Slovenia point at the popularity of Erasmus exchanges among university students and lecturers. Sweden has carried out an evaluation of the national projects in the field of training supported by Youth in Action and found their high value added in raising young people's vocational, as well as social and language skills.

Other European funding opportunities that have been used for cross-border training and job placements for young people are those created by the European Social Fund (ESF). For example in Germany 'IdA - Integration durch Austausch' made possible through the German ESF specifically offers opportunities for practical career experience in other EU countries to disadvantaged youth (youth with disabilities, long-term unemployed, early school leavers, single mothers). Young people are also eligible to draw on job opportunities abroad that are available to all employees and many NRs declare that their policies have actively utilized the EURES

network to promote youth mobility. In Belgium, Cyprus, Latvia and Poland international job fairs and workshops updating and training young people for job interviews with foreign employers are organized within this framework. A widely used channel for spreading information about job opportunities abroad and other transnational mobility schemes is Eurodesk which acts in addition to the national portals, NGO websites and other social.

The web portal – www.gostrange provides information about international mobility opportunities in the Flemish community in Belgium. Funding is offered for internships outside Belgium to young people still in education and for those outside the labour market. It also announces education and job fairs jointly arranged with France, Germany and Denmark. The website informs young people about volunteering, social and cultural events in Europe.

The information in the NRs about initiatives funded on a national and regional level is not as abundant as that about projects within EU programmes. The reports from Greece and some East European countries directly state that there are no established forms for cross-border cooperation between neighbouring countries in the field of youth employment and training. In other regions, most notably among the BENELUX countries and among the Nordic countries, cooperation agreements for youth exchanges have existed for decades. The report from the German speaking part of Belgium cites as successful practice the cooperation existing with Germany for common training of young people to achieve a Meisterbrief, in addition to the agreement for mutual recognition of training and education certificates. Another example from this report is the cooperation in the field of professional and vocational mobility within the framework of the Euregio-Maas-Rhein and in the Großregion (Greater region). Policy initiatives from Sweden include organizing of national and world ‘skills’ championships for young people. Cross-border agreements in Estonia offer young people seasonal work abroad.

2.3. Career guidance and counselling

This is a traditional field of youth policy in many European countries that needs to be reinforced and remodelled in order to meet the challenges coming from the diversification of youth transition paths and the growing flexibility of labour markets in Europe. There is a wide variety of terms in individual EU Member States that regulate and promote this kind of services which include a range of activities that enable citizens to identify their individual capacities, make educational, training and occupational decisions and develop career-management skills. High quality counselling and guidance related interventions have not only economic impact measured with delivery numbers but also more subtle benefits such as enabling individuals for life planning and positively influencing social equality.

The NRs demonstrate that this objective of the EU Youth Strategy is the policy field that is the most widely accepted and in which most efforts have been invested. Thus all reports either state that their respective governments have taken enough measures before the adoption of the EU document (25) or have initiated new measures and programmes afterwards (8). A common deduction from all reports is that such services are best developed by means of partnerships between national and regional authorities, guidance practitioners and other social partners in education and employment and through European cooperation. The NRs also attest to the need for flexibility and diversity of guidance provision and innovative implementation methodologies to support young people in their transitions to employment and adulthood more generally.

In most countries educational counselling and career guidance starts at school. In Sweden for example according to the New Education Act which came into force in 2011, access to competent career guidance is offered to every young person at all stages of the educational system – from compulsory schooling to adult education. In Denmark Youth guidance centres supported by the Ministry of Education place a focus on two crucial life stage transitions – from compulsory school to youth education and from youth education to higher education. Very popular is the national guidance portal which provides information on education and training at all levels, for various occupations and professions, the state of the labour market and statistics and others.

In Austria a specialized **school subject ‘career guidance and education counselling’** was made compulsory in 2009/10 school year. In addition, at the higher levels of the Austrian educational system the project **‘Studienchecker’** developed in cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Research offers guidance on further study pathways.

There is a similar trend in the new member States. In Latvia elements of career planning and personal development are included in various school subjects, as well as in extracurricular activities. The guidance policy in the Czech Republic was given a boost by the ‘Career Counselling Project’ developed by the University of Masaryk which relied on creating contacts between university students, graduates and employers. In Slovenia well developed career services are operational at universities and with the Employment Agency. In the opinion of young people consulted in writing the NR, however, these agencies serve well students in higher education but not those in primary and secondary schools.

Besides educational institutions, Public Employment Agencies are main providers of career guidance in all countries. The recent shifts in their activities include a focus on individualized guidance (Cyprus NR), establishment of a first stop-shop for information on employment opportunities and career prospects (Austrian NR) and developing the Vocational Information Centres (BIZ) which allow clients to choose from a variety of job opportunities, apprenticeships and other initial and specialized training options. In the Flemish Community of Belgium after the adoption of the Youth Strategy the public employment agencies assessed the strengths and weaknesses of their approach to the young in order to expand the opportunities of the counselling and one measure introduced was the maintaining a list of sectors with few job vacancies so that young people who search for jobs only in these sectors are encourage to broaden their search. In Greece a new project called Career Card provides guidance for young people and serves as a voucher for attending training courses, professional counselling and seminars. A recent trend in such activities is the increased use of the new technologies and social to empower young people to devise own career strategies. In Scotland a new strategy to redesign and improve careers services focused on developing people’s ability to manage their own career. The main provider Skills Development Scotland launched a new careers web service ‘My World of Work’.

Regional authorities also contribute to this policy field. For example in Vienna they established an employment service agency only for young people. Regional development plans in the three linguistic communities of Belgium all address the issues about quality in education, fair access and outcome-based training. In Germany the regional authorities in Hessen, together with schools AND local chambers of crafts, industry and commerce, implement a project for

counselling in vocational colleges which is aimed at early recognition and assistance to young people who are considering to opt out of school.

Youth Ministries and Youth departments are another influential partner providing counselling mainly through the Youth Information Centres. In Bulgaria and the Czech Republic new Youth Information and Consultative Centres became operational while Romania such centres act within the framework of the Child Protection Directorate since the current youth policy in the country places a high significance to the early preparation and career orientation. In Italy the Youth Department developed a guide ‘Good Job’ (www.ipotedilavoro) informing and guiding young people through the different legal conditions of the labour contracts and the rights and responsibilities going on with them. In Lithuania Youth Job Centres organize career counselling events and manage several successful projects providing information, career guidance and mediation services to the most vulnerable. The First Job Programme is very popular among graduates of different educational establishments. In addition, Career Information Points provide vocational guidance services. Young people though often report being dissatisfied with the quality of the services.

European VET policy initiatives, especially within the European qualifications framework for lifelong learning (EQF), and the European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET) are often cited in the NRs. Estonia acknowledges the support of the ESF for establishing two national programmes ‘Development of a System of Career Services’ and ‘Development of a System of Educational Guidance’ aiming not only at young people but also at parents, teachers, and youth workers. The ESF subsidized the Youth Employment Programme in Malta and the KIPNIS project in Latvia for developing careers education guidelines and teacher training for their implementation. With the funding of the European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals a new project started in Greece in 2012 with the objective of establishing youth centres in areas with a high rate of migrant population where migrant and local youth will meet and work together.

In Germany the ESF supported the development of several career guidance programmes:

- **JOBSTARTER** with the objective to stimulate innovations in and restructuring of the vocational training system;
- **Schulverweigerung–die 2.Chance** (‘School Drop Out – A second Chance’) which is developing opportunities for young people to integrate into the standard educational system and
- **Kompetenzagenturen** (Competence Agencies) for establishing alternative routes for studying and training outside the regular system.

A significant trend in the provision of counselling and guidance is the greater attention paid to the skills of the professionals working in counselling services. With this objective in Hungary a national network of such experts and a career guidance web portal were set up. The issue of professional training for counsellors is raised in the Swedish NR as well. Some NRs (Finish and Croatian) give account of renewed efforts to develop the evidence base of the guidance policy by conducting yearly surveys of the vocational aspirations of pupils in primary and secondary schools or the needs of young unemployed. These research results are then submitted to stakeholders on a national and regional level. In this way the counselling services are becoming

more responsive and better targeted to specific groups among youth. Many projects in the Czech Republic are devised to develop services for hard-to-reach young persons, the NEET group and those with economic and geographical disadvantage. Lower Saxony regional authorities in Germany support a network of Pro-Aktiv centres to improve the social integration of socially and individually disadvantaged young people by efforts to define the specific support needs and coordinate the necessary forms of assistance as part of a case management concept.

2.4. Promoting quality internships and apprenticeships

Closely related to the youth policy field of career guidance and counselling is the provision of apprenticeships and internships, because these forms of job placements in real work settings allow young people to acquire firsthand knowledge of occupations, business companies and economic sectors, to explore career alternatives and orient themselves better in the world of work. A quality training programme may increase personal work ethic and motivation and contribute to personal growth. Apprenticeships have a long tradition in Europe, as part of the formal vocational education and training involving a period of technical training in a specific occupation which can be solely a school-based programme or combined school and work-based programme. Internships are a more recent form of learning experience as part of the higher education system allowing students to work in a professional setting. The global economic crisis resulted in proliferation of apprenticeships and traineeships which are now offered in various forms and by numerous institutions. The underdeveloped legal basis of internships in many countries allow some companies to replace paid positions with a regular intake of unpaid interns or reduce the learning dimension of the programmes by allotting interns to tasks that do not contribute to the acquisition of professional skills. Other deficiencies of the system the lack of adequate funding, low transferability of skills gained in one enterprise to other companies, strong imbalance in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability and other problems in the fairness of access.

Similar to the reporting of initiatives for career guidance and counselling, all NRs state that the countries have taken measures in this field either before (25 NRs) or after (7) the adoption of the EU Youth Strategy. Most efforts have been directed at taking legal measures to regulate the conditions for provision and the quality of training, increase the places offered and provide adequate funding.

Legal changes have been carried out in several countries. In Finland regulatory measures were taken to ensure that companies that have done lay-offs for economic reasons in the previous 9 months cannot sign an agreement for traineeships with the aim to prevent replacing regular workers with interns. Other changes included regulations of working hours and precise job description for the work of the intern. The Finnish Act on equality between men and women adopted in the spring of 2010 is applied to training as well. In a similar direction were the legal changes in Spain where a royal decree for the modernization of the social security system was issued in October 2011 which made retrospectively participants in training programmes eligible for social security benefits. In Germany a special law was adopted in April 2012 to improve opportunities for labour market integration which opened new opportunities for practical training. A new focus on internships abroad led to the establishing of a working group "Pathways abroad" to develop quality criteria for those internships and create comparability between suppliers and products. The group itself is a new form of cooperation between several organizations such as DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), the International

Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience, the International Placement Services of the Federal Employment Agency/Euroguidance and Eurodesk Deutschland. In France reforms in the system of apprenticeships and internships were carried out in 2011 creating more opportunities for combining studies and training, easier administrative procedures and opening the apprenticeship system for companies with seasonal employment. In addition, a web site portal for traineeships started to provide information and online registering. An apprenticeship card was introduced which gives advantages to trainees similar to those of the holders of student cards. In the same year reforms in the system of vocational education and training were carried out in Luxembourg as well. A competence profile was developed for training in every occupation and profession and the learning programme was organized in modules so that each module develops one or more concrete competences of the trainee.

Sweden implemented a change in legislation according to which the apprenticeship during upper secondary school became a permanent alternative to higher education. For the period 2011-2014 this measure is funded with 86mln EUR. In addition, a **job guarantee** is offered to those young people registered as unemployed for more than 3 months. Thus in 2010 training was provided for 47 000 young people of whom 41% were women and 59% men.

Raising the quality of the internships and apprenticeships was the object of particular efforts in most countries in the reporting period. Thus the new Youth Plan in the French speaking community of Belgium focuses on greater professionalism in training provision including testing of employers' requirements and the professional projects that they are offering to the young, and developing a plan for gradual inclusion in the company. With a similar objective the government of Flanders (in the Flemish Community in Belgium) commissioned a study of internships and the ways in which they complement the skills developed in education. On this basis they simplified administrative procedures and developed quality criteria. Planned for 2012 is a colloquium on the monitoring of internships with the participation of educational and vocational training institutions. The Lithuanian NR acknowledges the great variation in the quality of internships among individual universities leading to a situation when many university students graduate without any practical experience, while others are forced to accept unattractive offers.

In Wales a recent restructuring of the apprenticeship system aimed to improve the prospects of young people while keeping the options for adults open. This led to a significant increase in the success rates – as the UK NR states, 75% of learners achieved a full certificate. Under preparation is a **'gold standard' for vocational competence** with the objective to raise the quality of apprenticeships. New initiatives include the creation of a web based apprenticeship vacancy system, the practice of sharing apprenticeships between employers and the **Pathways to Apprenticeships Programme** which places more efforts in the preparation of young people for apprenticeships before going to the real work setting.

Funding remains a problem in some countries vis-à-vis the growing demand for traineeships under the conditions of a tight labour market. Apprenticeships and internships are financed from national public sources – educational, employment and youth sectors; from private businesses and European funds. Increasingly parents are contributing to the costs of practical training. Many NRs (Estonia, Cyprus, Italy and the Czech Republic) describe projects funded by the ESF in order to widen opportunities for all young people willing to take up such training. In Slovenia the

Programme ‘Employ.me’ (ZAPOSLI.ME) targets disadvantaged groups in the labour market among them young people up to 25 and university graduates without any work experience. The youth representatives contributing to the Slovenian NR answered to this question that the efforts made were not enough and even unpaid apprenticeships did not meet the high demand and many graduates, particularly from social work or health sciences, could not find any placements. In Montenegro in 2011 a new concept on internships was developed to be implemented since 2013. It will allow university graduates to do a 9-month internship with 50% pay of the salary for the position. Of these training places 30% will be in public administration and 70% in private companies. Additional funding will be secured by the government in the amount of 10 mln EUR.

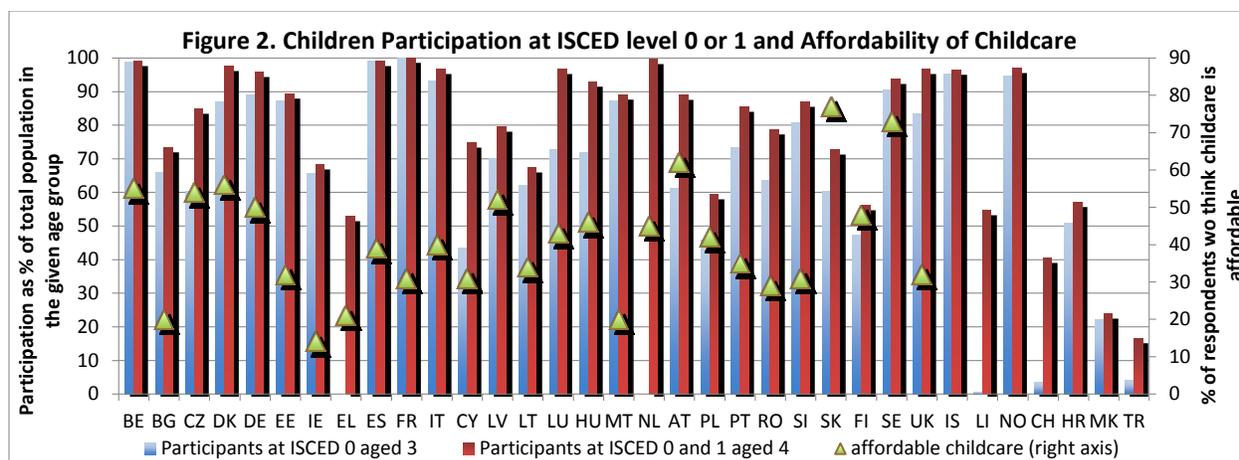
The Swiss National Youth Council (SAJV/CSAJ) in cooperation with the Youth Commission of the Swiss Labour Union (SGB/USS) published a **Manual about young workers’ rights** and a **Position Paper on Internships**. As a result the traditional role of the federal office for vocational education is now supplemented with training programmes offered by numerous public and private organizations.

In some countries it is the traineeships linked to the educational programmes as an optional or compulsory part of academic and/or vocational curricula that are most efficient. In others it is the practical training which is part of the active labour market policies that is seen as the best means to facilitate the labour market integration of young people. There are also traineeships offered in the open market some of which are very attractive while there is a widely shared concern with the inadequacy of the regulations over these forms of provision of work-related experience. Nevertheless most NRs attest to the increase in quality and efficiency of apprenticeships and internships. The NR from Malta for example provides data that 85% of graduates from apprenticeships in the country are employed with the same employer upon finishing the training while others start their own business.

2.5. Sharing of responsibilities between partners for a work-life balance

The reconciliation of paid work and unpaid care became a problem in modern societies with the decline of the traditional family model of the male breadwinner and the female carer in the home. Achieving a satisfactory balance between employment, family and wider life commitments and avoiding conflict and interference between these life domains is a prerequisite the successful social integration of young people. Work-and-family friendly policies include a system of accessible and quality childcare services; income support schemes to increase affordability; various forms of parental leaves; and increased flexibility of work.

As seen in Figure 2, there is a wide variation between the provision of early childhood education and care among European countries. In some of them such as Belgium, Spain and France, the enrolment of children as early as 3 years of age is very high, reaching a rate of almost all children in the relevant age group, while in others such as Turkey, Greece and Croatia it is very low and remains low even in the older age groups. Comparing the official statistics with the subjective data from the special Eurobarometer 355 ‘Poverty and Social Exclusion’ shown on Figure 2, we can argue that despite of the varying enrolment rate of young children, in all countries a significant proportion of the respondents consider that childcare is affordable. Most satisfied with the provision are respondents in Slovakia, Sweden and Austria and the least in Ireland, Bulgaria, Greece and Malta.



Sources: Eurostat – UEO, and 2010 Special Eurobarometer 355 ‘Poverty and Social Exclusion’.

The quantitative data in the NRs responding to the question about the forms of support to young parents show that in most countries (25 reports) such measures existed before the adoption of the EU youth strategy. Four countries report that such measures were taken after January 2010; one country, Montenegro, declares that such measures will be included in the new national Youth Policy Plan coming into force in 2013; and three countries, Member States, do not envisage such measures.

The analysis of the NRs indicates that the recent changes in parental leaves are directed towards making them more flexible thus giving more choice to parents. Instead of having a fixed period of leaves after the child birth, parents can decide when and how to use them until the 8th birthday of the child or until it starts school, for example one parent to take the leave part-time or the two parents to take the leave simultaneously. Such measures are reported by Austria, the French speaking community of Belgium, and the Czech Republic. A high degree of flexibility is characteristic for the parental leave system in Sweden. In this way Swedish parents can choose to be off work for long periods of time, or for single days or part of a day only. This time off may even be saved and used from 60 days before the expected delivery date until the child reaches eight years. Furthermore, there is a possibility of leave and compensation for income loss when a parent takes care of a sick child.

Financing of parental leaves is perceived as a strategy to encourage a more equal sharing of responsibilities between partners in the family, but also to make it easier for young couples to have the number of children that they wish. With these objectives, Austria raised the payment parents receive during the childcare leave. In some countries additional pay is provided by regional authorities as for example the system of ‘Flemish premium’ that supplements the federal allowance paid during parental leave. The parental allowance in Thuringia is paid independently of income for the care of all children from the child's second birthday until the child's third birthday after the payment of the German federal parental leave benefit. Tax relief is another financial support measure provided for working parents in many countries. Some national policies have taken measures to widen the eligibility for parental leave to include categories such as the self-employed in Belgium or to offer other forms of career breaks (the Netherlands). In Estonia a working parent is entitled to an additional child care leave of three working days per working year at his or her request if s/he has one or two children under fourteen years of age, and

six working days if s/he has three or more children under fourteen years of age or at least one child under three years of age.

The introduction of a paternity leave to be taken only by fathers upon the childbirth or soon after is one of the newer measures promoting equal responsibilities between partners. It varies from 2 to 30 days and the financial compensation is also very different. In Poland for example a one-week paternity leave was introduced in 2010 and it was prolonged to two weeks in 2012. In Bulgaria and Estonia the periods of maternity leave (reserved for mothers only) were shortened, so that fathers may now use the leave and get involved in childcare much earlier. Besides paternity leave, many policy initiatives encourage gender equality in parenthood by reserving a period of the family leave only for fathers or increasing the paid parental leave if both parents take some of it. Thus in Italy and Germany parental leave schemes grant the couple with a longer paid period if both partners take a portion of the leave. Finland reports that their current efforts in the gender equality policy are concentrated on stimulating fathers' use of parental leave. In 2008, in Sweden a gender equality bonus was introduced in the parental insurance system to encourage parents to share the parental leave. In addition many countries report new or continuing efforts to provide adequate and high quality dependant and childcare services and income support schemes to co-pay for caring services, which as we saw from Figure 2 are still not available and affordable for all parents wishing to use them.

While the current focus of this objective of the EU Youth Strategy is on the gender equal division of tasks in the household, the workplace is not excluded from contributing to it. Thus some measures target business companies in order to provide family friendly policies in the workplace recognizing the responsibilities of young people not only as employees but also as parents. For example in 2004 parents in Austria received the right to part-time work and in Germany they are entitled not only to part-time work but also part-time training. Luxemburg is applying the 'Mega Family Company for a WLB' which addresses both families and employers. The project website allows each individual to assess their own situation vis-à-vis the reconciliation of work and care. In the German speaking community of Belgium the project 'Alliance for Economy and Work' was financed with objectives to decrease the segmentation of the labour market and facilitate the reconciliation of work and care.

In Slovenia the '**Family-Friendly Enterprise**' project, co-funded by the European Social Fund, was designed to tackle a significant obstacle for the reconciliation of work and family life - the widespread attitude among employers that parenthood is disrupting the work process. It includes a competition among companies and awards the certificate 'Family-Friendly Enterprise'. In 2007–2011 more than 90 companies and organisations employing more than 40 000 workers received such a certificate. The process of selection is based on the European Work & Family Audit system developed by the German organisation Berufundfamilie.

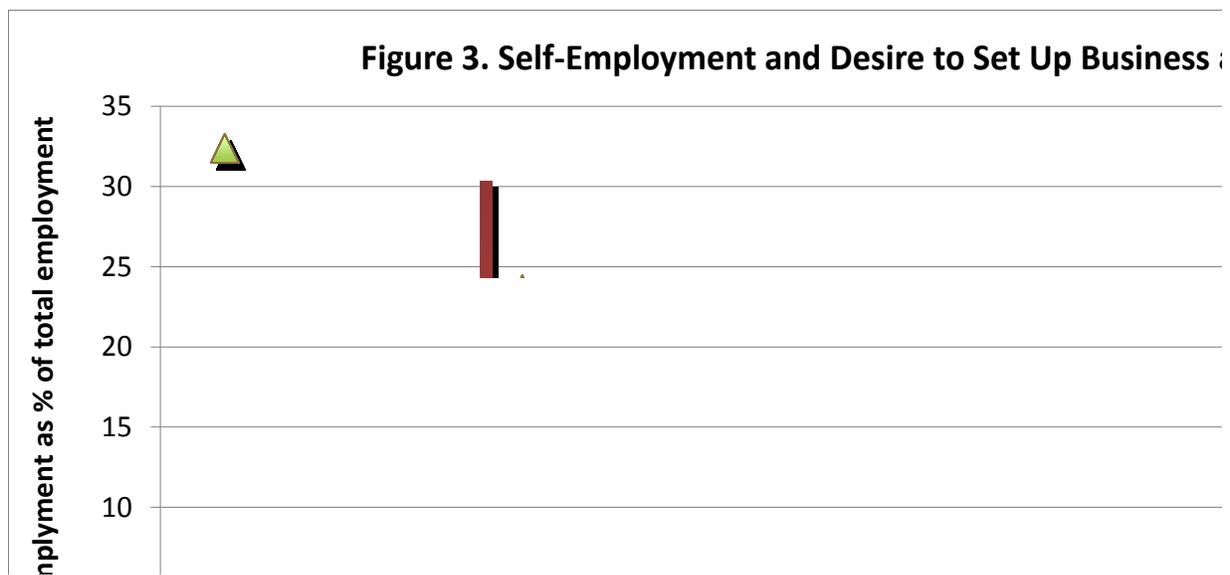
In Italy many awareness campaigns were organized in the business sector and financial support was offered to private projects aimed at turning enterprises into family friendly workplaces. The Maltese Public Employment Service is currently working on an EU-funded media campaign 'Nista'- The Benefits of Sharing Life's Responsibilities Campaign, which targets both male and female employees as well as employers, and highlights the importance of flexible working arrangements, work-life balance, and sharing of family responsibilities.

Besides companies, local communities and the wider public are also targeted by various measures to promote equal sharing of caring responsibilities. In Austria the company „Familie & Beruf Management GmbH” carries out the project „Family-Friendly Community Audit” which aims to promote family-friendly measures at the local level: villages, towns and cities and those identified as best practices receive a quality label by the Family Ministry. In Estonia the government supports the organization of awareness raising events and publications. In Greece the current National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality also foresees the organization of campaigns and publishing of promotional materials.

2.6. Encouraging entrepreneurship in the field of sustainable development

Youth self-employment and entrepreneurship are often pointed at as a solution to mass unemployment at times of economic crises by increasing job creation and preventing withdrawal from the labour force. Youth entrepreneurship, however, is much more than a response to an unfriendly labour market. It is a way for increasing the dynamics and innovation of the economy, a generator of economic and social capital in the community, a field of creativity and empowerment of the entrepreneur. In the case of social entrepreneurship, it contributes to the sustainability of the environment and communities at the local, national and global levels.

Survey data from Flash Eurobarometer 319b testify that young people express a higher interest in self-employment than older citizens while in practice they are much less self-employed than the adults. Figure 3 compares young people’s wish to set up their own business company and the share of those who have succeeded in realizing their wish in practice. Despite variations among countries, in all of them young people are underrepresented among the self-employed and their expressed desire is higher than the actual rate.



NRs demonstrate that the promotion of youth entrepreneurship is a common strategy in European countries. Most answers (25) indicate that such measures have been taken already before 2010, the rest have either made such initiatives in the past two years or plan to do so (two answers for not having current plans).

Many countries report to have initiated policy measures to develop entrepreneurship skills within the educational system including action plans focused exclusively on the integration of entrepreneurship education; broader educational or economic strategies which incorporate objectives for entrepreneurship education; and individual or multiple initiatives related to entrepreneurship education. The Lithuanian national education strategy adopted in 2003 was the first to explicitly mention entrepreneurship education. The Danish NR indicates that in 2009 four ministries combined their efforts to develop a ‘Strategy for Education and Training in Entrepreneurship’ including education for sustainable development. In a similar way Norway established a system of entrepreneurial learning in the schools with the involvement of regional educational authorities, employers’ organizations and trade unions. In Sweden the new Education Act adopted in 2011 integrated entrepreneurial education in the curriculum from primary school to university education and in lifelong learning programmes.

The Flemish Agency for Entrepreneurship in Belgium offers grants for projects linking education and business in the field of sustainable development:

- **Opinno** encourages university students in natural sciences to orient their business activities towards energy and living environment;
- **CORE** supports students in secondary schools to work on methods for a rational use of energy together with a start-up cooperative; and
- **‘Youth Initiatives for Ethical Trade’** supports secondary school students to develop business plans in the field of fair-trade products.

A focus on education for entrepreneurial skills was placed in the policy measures in other countries as well. In the Czech Republic in 2009 the Ministry of Industry and Trade launched a call for proposals for projects under the heading ‘Entrepreneurial Culture of Young People and Entrepreneurial Education’ intended to support university lecturers to develop and teach such courses. The measures also include funds for devising innovative teaching materials, and creating of an online platform in support of university graduates wishing to start their own business. In Croatia in 2007 an advisory group ‘Education for Entrepreneurship’ (E4E) was established with partners in education, economy, both state and private, also civic associations to promote entrepreneurship education as one of the eight key competences. In 2010 the government adopted the Strategy for Entrepreneurial Learning for 2010-2014 which envisions cooperation with the Regional Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning in Southeast Europe.

In Montenegro the project **ECO NET** targeting university students in economics was developed in cooperation with Austrian organization KulturKontakt. The **Student Enterprise** project is implemented in cooperation with the Norwegian non-profit organization Business Innovation Programmes (BIP) and has a website www.servisvcentarpzv.me connecting students and teachers with enterprises.

Analyzing this field of policy measures it is necessary to stress that although most of them are still directed towards students in vocational schools and universities, there is a shift toward earlier levels of the educational system, primary school in particular. Other recent trends include the application of multidisciplinary approaches and innovative media; and a focus on cooperation of different stakeholders in the development and implementation of the programmes. Many NRs point at the involvement of community, syndicate and business organizations in the education for

entrepreneurship. Youth organizations make a significant contribution in the informal learning for entrepreneurship. The Austrian NR underlines the role of youth associations in developing the so called soft skills, such as ability to communicate with others, handle conflicts, and work in a team and in spreading an attitude against the stigma of failure through encouraging a culture of second and third chances.

Another broad category of policy interventions concerns the provision of information, advice, coaching and mentoring for young people wishing to start their own business. Very often such measures are integrated with offering financial support in the form of grants, covering living expenses, micro financing, as well as with developing an adequate infrastructure for entrepreneurship – clubs, conferences, business incubators. Legal changes reducing administrative and tax burden are also adopted for the stimulation of innovation and creativity in business start up and growth. In Belgium most activities in this field are developed at the regional level. Thus in the French speaking community encouraging ecological entrepreneurship was defined as a priority. The Green Plan Marshall 2 strives to increase eco-investments and innovations by bringing together activities for preserving the environment, employment and entrepreneurship. In Brussels the Alliance Emploi–Environnement implements activities in the field of education and employment, with the objective to combat the negative consequences of the economic crisis over the environment and the quality of life. In 2011 Italy adopted a measure funded jointly by the Youth Department of the government and private businesses with the objective to promote innovative ideas for new enterprises in the field of ecological protection – ‘Diritto al futuro’. In Cyprus the Promotion of Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme was developed under the Operational Programme ‘Sustainable Development and Competitiveness’ and the European Regional Development Fund. It is directed to young people aged between 20 and 39 providing grants and educational seminars for entrepreneurship focusing on new technologies, E-services, tourism. In Poland a focus is placed on Academic Business Incubators – aiming to advance enterprising attitudes among youth.

Many NRs state that successful entrepreneurship programmes targeting unemployed youth in their countries are operated by the Employment Agencies. The Employment Agency in Lithuania provides subsidies for job seekers who wish to start their own businesses. The new entrepreneurs receive a partial compensation for the income tax and social insurance contributions. Under the programme ‘Business Lithuania’ many events to promote entrepreneurship among young people are organised. In addition, ‘Junior Achievement Lithuania’ funds projects for consultancy and promotion of entrepreneurship such as ‘Business Experience Academy’ and ‘Founding of Business Training Establishments’ in Vilnius County. The project “Learning network on inclusive entrepreneurship” is implemented in cooperation with Germany, Austria, Belgium and the Czech Republic.

In Bulgaria the Employment Agency implements two schemes for youth entrepreneurship, which are very popular among Bulgarian youth: **TECHNOSTART** offers grants to young people wishing to develop small technological companies; and **JOBS** (Job Opportunity through Business Support) helps unemployed young people who wish to start their own business in over 60 municipalities in the country.

The Public Employment Service in Malta operates an entrepreneurship scheme *Ibda Negożju Tiegħek* ‘INT’ which is one-stop-shop programme aimed at promoting an enterprise culture and

offering a package of counselling, training, mentoring and financial assistance. Spain adopted the Action Plan to Support Entrepreneurship in 2010 in which a very successful initiative is “Entrepreneurship together” aiming to promote entrepreneurial culture through organizing ‘Entrepreneur Days’ in cooperation with regional and local authorities. In addition, the National Innovation Enterprise (ENISA) gives access to preferential financing for SMEs. The Employment Agency in Latvia offers the young unemployed to enter self employment after completion of courses on business administration, project management, development of a business plan, accounting and finance, marketing and management. The programme ‘Support for self-employment and business start-ups’ provides consultations, training, loans and grants, as well as business incubators offering premises and equipment.

The Slovenian NR presents an interesting case for consideration. In the field of sustainable development, in 2011 the country adopted “Zakon o socialnem podjetnistvu” - Act on Social Entrepreneurship, which promotes projects with socially useful activities. However, the youth representatives contributing to the NR expressed the opinion that in the business start up initiatives youth has not been defined as a priority group and only a tiny layer among youth has profited from the opportunities. While young people are eligible to use measures devised for all (this is underlined in the German and Finish NRs), it is also necessary to find specific measures to promote entrepreneurship among young people. What is more, such measures should try to reach over the vulnerable groups as well and not only pick up the most promising ideas of advantaged young people. Some NRs (Italy, Greece) do present projects targeting young people with low education, NEETs, ethnic minorities. In the Czech Republic and Lithuania special schemes support entrepreneurship among rural youth.

Conclusions

This overview examines the actions taken by the EU Member States and partner countries for the implementation of the overall priority Employment and Entrepreneurship of the EU Youth Strategy in the first cycle of the Open Method of Coordination in the youth field (2010-2012). The analysis of the NRs reveals a common awareness of the gravity of the problems accumulated in the labour market integration of young people and the economic and social consequences of youth vulnerability. It also attests to the enormous efforts on all levels, European, national, regional and local, put forward for supporting young people to make a successful entry in the world of work.

The common objective for promotion of employment and entrepreneurship is realized through a variety of national strategies, specific measures and initiatives influenced by the countries’ traditions and the visions and resourcefulness of the current policy actors, including young people themselves. The national youth policies in this domain differ in the division of responsibilities between the state, the market and the civil society, and the extent to which they rely on young people’s own resourcefulness. The NRs demonstrate the effectiveness of sharing of good practices between countries and the need for fostering cooperation among policy actors.

Comparing the policy measures on the first Trio Presidency priority, it became clear that the most widely developed by all countries were those in the field of promoting quality internships and apprenticeships and of developing career guidance and counselling services. Such initiatives were part of national youth policies before the entry into force of the EU Youth Strategy but as the results show, most countries have found innovative ways to make them available to more

young people, including the most vulnerable. Using the new technologies, youth information centres and public employment agencies have developed interactive websites for labour market information and advice for the new entrants or the unemployed. More attention is given to informal learning and the role that youth organisations play for improving young people's skills and employability. Many countries have established new frameworks for quality provision and control of internships and for the professionalization of the career guidance and counselling.

In a similar way, encouraging entrepreneurship is also a traditional domain of youth policy which has however found a new impetus after 2010. In particular, the countries have devised and implemented specific measures to promote entrepreneurship education at all levels of the educational system starting from primary school. The focus on sustainable development when supporting youth entrepreneurial projects is also a novel trend in many parts of Europe. Several countries have made legal changes to reduce the tax and administrative burden and make it easier for young people to take the road from education or inactivity to the business start and from there to the business development and success.

Promoting cross-border professional and vocational opportunities among young people is another field of concerted efforts of national youth policies in the first cycle of implementation of the Youth Strategy. In some countries recent measures focus on EU-wide mobility while others concentrate on traditional cross-border links to allow young people to gain practical experience from work and training abroad. Everywhere special support schemes are designed to widen access to mobility for all young people and not only for a privileged minority. One way to encourage mobility for work and study is to develop measures for the reconciliation of paid work and unpaid care. Most NRs provide information about initiatives to promote the sharing of responsibilities among partners creating equal career and parenting opportunities for both young men and women. A crucial issue here is to increase the affordability, flexibility and quality of childcare services. The novel focus in this policy domain is to tackle inequality in the household and change outdated models of parental roles through incentives for fathers' sharing childcare leaves.

The question about ensuring a youth perspective when devising flexicurity strategies received the most responses that such actions were taken after the EU Strategy came into force in January 2010 or that plans in this direction were made for 2012. While not all countries designed specific measures to increase flexibility of work and statistical data confirm that indeed there are wide variations in the spread of part-time and fixed-term work in European labour markets, all of them implemented initiatives to provide more security for the young. Several countries have changed their labour codes and introduced tax incentives to stimulate employers for hiring young people.

The results of the comparative analysis show that the priority of employment and entrepreneurship in the EU Youth Strategy was well accepted by the Member States and beyond and widely implemented in numerous initiatives in support of young people's creative potential. An all-inclusive perspective to policies providing opportunities for all young people to become the new qualified, flexible, and mobile workforce in European economy should be strengthened.